

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9882

INFO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

USINT HAVANA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USNATO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 06502

MONROVIA FOR RICHARD M. MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, PEPR, UR, ET, SO, DJ

SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL ON SITUATION IN HORN

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REF: ADDIS ABABA 1399 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL GIVES NO HINT OF EITHER
REDEPLOYMENT OR REDUCTION OF SOVIET/CUBAN MILITARY FORCES
IN ETHIOPIA. HE CITES ETHIOPIAN DESIRE FOR POLITICAL
SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM, BUT DOES NOT EXCLUDE

MILITARY PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE THIS END. SOVIET REITERATES BREZHNEV LINE OF SUPPORT FOR DJIBOUTI SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE, AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON MARCH 30, MFA THIRD AFRICA DEPT., COUNSELOR L. D. MIRONOV (SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA, DJIBOUTI) TOUCHED ON FOLLOWING THEMES.

2. SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA. MIRONOV REPEATED STANDARD LINE, I.E., SOVIET EXPERTS WERE THERE ONLY TO HELP IMPROVE ETHIOPIAN DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND CUBAN PRESENCE WAS MATTER BETWEEN ETHIOPIANS AND CUBANS. HE DID CHALLENGE U.S. FIGURE OF 1,000 FOR SOVIET MILITARY EXPERTS SAYING THAT NUMBER WAS NOT SO LARGE AND THAT PERHAPS SOMEONE HAD COUNTED MILITARY DEPENDENTS WHILE THEY WERE AT IT. HE ARGUED AT LENGTH OVER "LINKAGE" PROBLEM, SAYING THIS WAS ARTIFICIAL ISSUE DRUMMED UP BY THOSE OPPOSED TO SALT II. SUCH SIDE ISSUES SHOULD NOT PREVENT PROGRESS ON THE BIG PROBLEMS, HE SAID; FOR EXAMPLE, WE COULD MAKE NEUTRON BOMB SUCH AN OBSTACLE BUT WE DON'T. IN HIS OWN QUESTIONS HE IMPLIED A BELIEF THAT (A) BRZEZINSKI AND SECRETARY WERE OF TWO MINDS ON WHETHER LINKAGE SHOULD BE APPLIED BY ADMINISTRATION AND (B) THAT ADMINISTRATION HAD BACKED AWAY FROM ITS PRIOR CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN OVER ISSUE.

3. REDUCTION OF SOVIET/CUBAN FORCES. MIRONOV GAVE NO INDICATION THAT SOVIET/CUBAN FORCES WOULD BE REDUCED IN NEAR FUTURE. BY HIS COMMENTS ON REMAINING POCKETS OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN OGADEN AND LACK OF SOMALI REJECTION OF TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ON ETHIOPIA, HE IMPLIED A JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUED PRESENCE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN OGADEN. ALTHOUGH NOT IN THE SAME CONTEXT, HE ADMITTED CONTINUED UNREST WITHIN ETHIOPIA, EVEN IN ADDIS ABABA ITSELF: A FURTHER INDICATION THAT SOVIETS/CUBANS WERE NEEDED.

4. ERITREA. MIRONOV WAS VERY CAUTIOUS IN DISCUSSING ISSUES RELATED TO ERITREA. HE SAID THAT SOVIET "UNDERSTANDING" OF PMAC INTENTIONS WAS THAT WHILE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WOULD NEVER LET ERITREA GO, IT WOULD BE WILLING TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH LOCAL ERITREAN LEADERS OR EVEN LEADERS OF THE VARIOUS ERITREAN MOVEMENTS TO DISCUSS THE FORM WHICH ERITREAN "AUTONOMY" MIGHT TAKE. THE PMAC "PREFERRED" A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO A MILITARY ONE, HE SAID, ADDING THAT ERITREANS WERE

QUITE CAPABLE OF CARRYING ON GUERRILLA WARFARE FOR
"FIFTY YEARS," SOMETHING WHICH PMAC COULD ILL AFFORD.
BUT IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S QUESTION WHETHER THE PMAC
MIGHT BELIEVE IT COULD DRIVE THE ERITREANS TO SERIOUS
NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF MILITARY
PRESSURE - WITH PERHAPS SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORT - HE
MERELY SAID THAT SUCH AN IDEA WAS "TEMPTING." IN
CONCLUDING THIS THEME, HE SAID THAT PMAC COULD COUNT
ON OAU SYMPATHY IN ITS EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH ERITREAN
PROBLEM DUE TO PREVIOUS EXAMPLE OF BIAFRAN SECESSION
ATTEMPT IN NIGERIA AS WELL AS FACT THAT ERITREANS
WERE SUPPORTED BY "ARABS" AS OPPOSED TO "AFRICANS."

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MONROVIA FOR RICHARD M. MOOSE

5. VISITS. ASKED ABOUT FUTURE MINISTERIAL LEVEL
VISITS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOVIET UNION, MIRONOV
NOTED OPEN INVITATION FOR SOVIET LEADERSHIP TO VISIT
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ETHIOPIA, BUT SAID NO PLANS HAD BEEN MADE FOR SUCH
VISITS IN EITHER DIRECTION. WORKING LEVEL VISITS, HE
SAID, CONTINUED APACE.

6. DJIBOUTI. DURING A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON
DJIBOUTI MIRONOV SAID:

-- THE PMAC HAD NO INTEREST IN DESTABILIZING THE
SITUATION WITHIN DJIBOUTI. RATHER IT WOULD PREFER A
MORE STABLE SITUATION THERE TO RELIEVE ETHIOPIAN
ANXIETIES ABOUT THE VITAL FLOW OF GOODS THROUGH THE PORT.

-- RECENT ETHIOPIAN STATEMENTS ABOUT DJIBOUTI HAD
REFLECTED ETHIOPIAN CONCERN OVER CONTINUED SOMALI
CLAIMS ON THE TERRITORY AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT
PRESIDENT CARTER, IN HIS MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE, HAD
EXCLUDED DJIBOUTI FROM THE LIST OF THOSE COUNTRIES
WHOSE BORDERS SOMALI MUST RESPECT. (EMBOFF SAID THIS
WAS A MISREADING OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS, THAT PRESIDENT
HAD REFERRED ALSO TO TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF "ALL"
COUNTRIES IN REGION AND THAT U.S. HAD GOOD RELATIONS
WITH DJIBOUTI AND FIRMLY SUPPORTED DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE,
SOVEREIGNTY, AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY).

-- SOVIET UNION ITSELF HAD PRINCIPLED, UNCHANGING
POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE,
SOVEREIGNTY, AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. MESSAGE TO
THIS EFFECT HAD BEEN SENT TO DJIBOUTI PRESIDENT BY
BREZHNEV ON OCCASION OF ANNOUNCEMENT OF DJIBOUTI
INDEPENDENCE AND SOVIETS HAD OFFERED TO ESTABLISH
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (SOVIETS WERE STILL WAITING FOR
AN ANSWER, HE ADDED).

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7. COMMENT. MIRONOV WAS EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS THAN
USUAL IN DISCUSSING FUTURE PLANS FOR SOVIET AND CUBAN

FORCES. WHILE HE CAREFULLY AVOIDED SPECIFIC STATEMENTS
IN THIS REGARD, THE IMPRESSION HE LEFT WAS THAT HE
DID NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY WITHDRAWAL OR SIGNIFICANT
REDUCTION WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. TOON

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